

A  
SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

The 22<sup>d</sup> of May, 1692.

Upon Occasion of the late VICTORY

OBTAINED BY

Their Majesties Fleet

OVER THE

FRENCH.

By JOHN SCOTT, D. D. Chaplain in Ordinary  
to Their Majesties.

at the Command of Their Majesties Special Command.

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# S E R M O N

Preached before the

# Q U E E N.

Pfalm 50. 14.

*Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy  
vows unto the most High.*

**I**N the foregoing Verses the Psalmist (whether he were *David* or *Asaph* is uncertain) introduces God as delivering his own Sense concerning the Ritual and Ceremonial Religion of the *Jews*, upon which they so much valu'd themselves, and laid such a mighty stress; *v. 7. Hear O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testifie against thee; or I have something of high Moment to speak to thee, I am God even thy God, that God who, under the Title of The Lord thy God,*

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brought

brought thee out of the Land of *Egypt*, and gave thee the Moral Law comprised in Ten Commandments. *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices and burnt offerings to have been continually before me*: I know thou art exact enough in the observance of these my Ritual Commands, and therefore as to this matter I do not blame thee; but this is not the thing I chiefly value and esteem: 'Tis the observance of my Moral Laws, in which thou art extremely defective, that I principally insist on; as for those Sacrifices with which thou causest mine Altars continually to smoke, they are things with which (if I needed 'em) I could supply my self from the Herds of a Thousand Hills which thou knowest not, and which are all my own. And so he goes on to the Text, upbraiding 'em with laying the whole stress of their Religion upon their exact performance of the instituted Rites of it; which, tho' it was their Duty, yet the least part of it. And then comes, in the Text, to acquaint 'em what was the main of their Religion, which he principally intended, and was most delighted in, and wherein they were most remiss and negligent, *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High, i. e.* If thou wilt bring me an acceptable Sacrifice indeed, in the first place, bring me a truly thankful Heart, that gratefully receives and acknowledges my Benefits; and in the next place, perform to me those Vows and Promises of Repentance and Amendment, which thou madest to me in thy Affliction, when out of extreme want of the Benefits I have since bestowed



stowed on thee, thou wast earnestly imploring 'em at my Hands.

I shall at present only treat of the first of these, *Offer unto God thanksgiving*, which, according to the Sense I have given of the Text and Coherence, is a Duty of far more value with God than any of the instituted Rituals of Religion, as being one of those Moral and eternal Duties in which the Main and Substance of Religion doth consist. In handling this Argument therefore, I shall endeavour these two Things,

First, To shew you what this Duty is, and wherein it doth consist,

Secondly, To shew you that it is a Moral Duty, or, which is the same thing, a Duty enforced with eternal Reasons.

I. What this Duty of Thanksgiving is, and wherein it doth consist. In general, Thanksgiving consists in rendering to our Benefactors a chearful acknowledgment of the Benefits we have received at their Hands; and consequently, to offer Thanksgiving to God, is freely, heartily, and chearfully, to acknowledge and recognize to him the manifold Favours and Benefits which with a most liberal Hand he bestows upon us from time to time. In order to which, it is necessary that we should diligently remark and attend to his Benefits, and not suffer 'em to pass thorough our Minds like Birds thorough the Air without leaving any Track or Path behind 'em; but that we should so curiously observe and take notice of 'em,



that every Footstep of 'em, if possible, may remain upon our Memories in lively and lasting impressions: For tho' we can no more count the Benefits of God than we can the Moments of Eternity, and tho' when ever we enter into the recollection of 'em, we are like a man that is diving into the bottom of the Sea, over whose Head the water runs insensibly, so as that neither he is pressed with the weight of it, nor confounded with the number of the drops of it, because he attempts not to cast 'em up, but concludes 'em innumerable; yet there are many and many of the Benefits of God which lie so open to our observation, being attended with such indearing and remarkable Circumstances, as that without great stupidity, we cannot but take notice of 'em. And therefore in order to our being truly thankful to God, it is requisite that such as these should be drawn and imprinted upon our memories in strong and lively Colours, not to be worn or washed out by Time or Chance, but to flourish there, if possible, like the Pictures of the Graces in immortal Youth. And as to our giving Thanks to God for his Benefits, as it is requisite that we should so far as we are able, closely observe and remember 'em; so it is no less requisite, that, by frequent reflections upon 'em, we should endeavour to raise in our own Minds a just value and esteem of 'em, and thereby to affect our own Hearts with a warm and vigorous Sense of the Divine Goodness, that inexhaustible Fountain whence every good we receive is derived. And when with the close consideration

of



of the Favours and Benefits of God we have chased our own Souls into an affectionate feeling of his Goodness, we may then cry out with *David*, *My heart is ready, O Lord my heart is ready, I will sing and give praise.* For the Requisites before mentioned, are only necessary Dispositions and Preparations to Thanksgiving; they are only the tuning the Strings of the musical Instrument, and setting it in order, for the Angelical Harmony to be plaid on it: but the Thanksgiving itself consists in an affectionate Acknowledgment to God, of the manifold Favours we have received at his hands, together with all those gracious Circumstances, so far as we are able to recollect them, with which they came attended: which Acknowledgment is to be made either in express Words, in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, or by recounting his Favours to him in mental Recognitions, which is to make melody in our Hearts to the Lord. But because usually when the Heart is full, the Mouth will overflow, therefore Thanksgiving in common Acceptation, signifies an oral and verbal Acknowledgment of Gods Favours, arising from an inward and affectionate Sense and Feeling of his Goodness towards us. And to crown all this, and render our Thanksgiving substantial and real, it must be accompanied with a hearty sturdy and intention of Soul, to render unto God for his Favor, all possible Compensation; to gratifie him with our free and chearful Obedience, and more especially with our Charity and Beneficence, towards his



his poor and indigent Creatures, whose Wants are the Briefs by which God authorizes them to ask relief for his Sake, and to receive it in his Name: *He that giveth to the Poor, saith the Wiseman, lendeth to the Lord;* and consequently he that giveth not, refuseth to lend to the Lord; which is inconsistent with any degree of hearty Gratitude towards him. For how can he be truly thankful to God for his Favors, who hath no intention to render him any Compensation; and what intention can he have to compensate God, who will not lend him a little Money or a little Bread, when by the Mouths or Necessities of his Poor he craves it? This Man complements God instead of thanking him, and only flatters him with fained Lips, in hope thereby to obtain further Favors of him, without being at all influenced by an ingenuous Sense of his Goodness, to make him any returns for what he hath already received. So that the full import of our *Offering Thanksgiving* to God, is to render him an affectionate Acknowledgment of his manifold Benefits, with an hearty intention to make him all the Compensation for them we are able, by our constant and chearful Obedience to his heavenly Will, and readiness to repay him in works of Charity, according as our Abilities and the Necessities of the Poor shall require it. And accordingly the Psalmist himself thus explains this Duty: *I will remember, saith he, thy works of old, and talk of thy doings:* and elsewhere, *My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips, when I remember*



ber thee upon my Bed and meditate on thee in the night-watches, because thou hast been my help. Here is his advertence to and recollection of the Mercies of God towards him. And then he goes on, *How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! how precious are thy thoughts unto me! how great is the sum of them! if I should count them they are more than the sand.* Here is his high esteem and value of the divine Benefits; then he proceeds, *Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee, my soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness, my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.* Here is his affectionate sense of the divine Goodness towards him! Then he breaks forth into raptures of Thanksgiving, *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, with my mouth will I make known his faithfulness to all generations; I will speak of the glorious honor of thy Majesty and of thy wondrous works; I will praise the name of the Lord with a song, I will magnifie him with Thanksgiving.* And lastly, he closes all this with a hearty design of rendering to God these best and noblest Compensations of his Obedience and Charity; *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? And upon this Enquiry resolves, I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my Vows unto the Lord, i. e. those Vows of Sacrifice, and Alms of Fidelity and Obedience, which I made in my Distress and Affliction.* And thus you see what there is implied in this Duty of Offering Thanksgiving unto God.



I proceed now in the second place, to shew you that this is a Moral Duty, not founded upon positive Will and Institution, as Sacrificing was, which therefore could no longer oblige, than during the continuance of that positive Will; but upon eternal and immutable Reasons, which no positive Will can ever cancel or repeal: and this I doubt not will appear upon the following Considerations.

First, The Justice and Equality of it.

Secondly, The Pleasure and Delightfulness of it.

Thirdly, The Obligations it lays upon God to continue and repeat his Favors.

Fourthly, The great Aid and Furtherance it gives us in all our other Duties.

Fifthly, The mighty Relish it gives to all God's Favors and Benefits.

Sixthly, The great Support and Confirmation it affords our Faith and Dependence upon God for the future.

I. Thankfulness to God is due to him in strict Justice and Equity, for the Benefits God bestows upon us, are rather Loans than Gifts; because as he is supreme Lord of the World, he retains an unalienable Propriety in every Good he bestows; and upon that account he may justly demand of us whatsoever Homage or Quit-rent he pleaseth; and certainly the least he can claim is our Gratitude, from which we are so far from being released by the freeness of his Gifts, that we are the more strictly obliged by it. For he who receives a Benefit, whether it be from

God



God or Man, owes more or less for it proportionably as the Benefit is greater or less. Seeing therefore that a Benefit freely given is *cæteris paribus*, much greater than a Benefit lent; 'tis certain, that the freer we have it, the more we owe for't. Now as for the Benefits of God, they are not only in themselves of greater value than what any other can give or lend us, but they are also given us upon the most free, and noble, and generous Terms; for tho when he bestows 'em upon us, he doth not like other Doners give 'em away from himself, but reserves his inherent Right in them, as Lord Paramount of all his Creation; yet this Reservation of his is no damage to us, seeing we enjoy his Gifts as amply and freely as if he had alienated to us his Right in 'em. Tho he still continues Sovereign Lord of the Fee, and every thing we hold we hold as his Tenants, by his Grant, and in his Right; yet the Quit-Rent he requires of us (which is only our Gratitude, and which in Justice would have been due to him, tho he should never have required it,) is not only so very small and easie in it self, but also so highly advantageous to us, that instead of being impoverished, we are enriched by the payment of it; so that our Tenure under him is far better for us than if we were Freeholders, without any Condition at all; the Condition of his Benefit being such as is so far from sinking the value of 'em, as that it very much raises and enhances 'em. So that as we stand in Justice obliged to be grateful to all our Benefactors, (seeing every Benefit deserves of us as



much as it is worth, and the smallest is worth our Gratitude; so more especially to God, who not only gives us all the good Things we enjoy, but takes care also to give 'em to us upon the most beneficial Considerations, *viz.* That we Thankfully receive 'em. Which, if we duly perform, will prove far more beneficial to us than all his other Benefits.

II. Consider the Pleasure and Delightfulness of this Duty. It is true, in other parts of Devotion there is something that is Painful and Laborious to Humane Nature: For so Prayer awakens in us a sorrowful Sense of Wants and Imperfections, Confession excites in us sharp and dolorous Reflections upon our Guilts and Miscarriages; but *Thanksgiving* has nothing in it but a warm and vigorous sense of the mightiest Love and most indearing Goodness. For it is only the overflow of a heart full of Love, the free sally and emission of a Soul that is captivated and indearing by Kindness; and there is no Passion in Humane Nature so sweet and ravishing as Love; especially while being heated with the warm sense of the Kindness of its beloved, it boils over upon it in Praise and Gratitude. And seeing our *Thanksgiving* lives upon Love and Beneficence, and is all along nourished and maintained by it, the greater the Love is upon which it feeds and the more the Beneficence, the richer its Fare is, and the nobler its Entertainment. But where can our Gratitude find out a Love comparably so great or productive of such ample Beneficence, as that of Gods? Upon this inexhaustible Subject it may live for ever without any other Supplies; and fare deliciously every moment



to eternal Ages. For what more delicious or comfortable thought can ever present itself to the mind of Man than this, that the great Lord of the World, the good, the wise and mighty King of Heaven and Earth, is our faithful, kind and munificent Friend; that his Heart is always pregnant with Designs of Love to us, and that the great subject of all his Contrivances is to do us good here, and to render us Glorious hereafter? O were such thoughts as these but set home upon our hearts with their full and due Emphasis, how would they even ravish and transport our Souls! How would they convert all our Faculties into Concert and Harmony, and even evaporate our Spirits in a Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving to him! And whilst from a lively Sense of all these Wonders of his Love, we are offering up to him our Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, O with what Triumph and Exultation of Soul should we ascend in the flames of it! But, alas, we are, even the best of us, in a great measure unacquainted with the Pleasure and Sweetness of this heavenly Performance; and the reason is, because we have not a quick Sense and lively Relish of the Divine Goodness upon which it terminates. Had we this always present with us, we should feel so much Joy and Pleasure in Thanksgiving, that it would be our Heaven upon Earth, our Meat and Drink, our Business and Recreation, to breath up our Souls to God in Hymns of Praise. But this we do all know, who know any thing of Religion, that to laud and magnifie the Lord, is the



End for which we were born, and the Heaven for which we are designed, and that when we are arrived to that vigorous sense of the Divine Love that the blessed People of Heaven have attained, we shall need no other either Employment or Pleasure to render us for ever happy, but only to sing eternal Praises and *Hallelujahs* to our God, and to the Lamb that sitteth upon the Throne; the vigorous Relish of whose unspeakable Goodness to us, will so inflame our Love and animate our Gratitude, that to eternal Ages we shall be never able to contain our selves from breaking forth into new Songs of Praise; and then every new Song will still create a new Pleasure, and every new Pleasure dictate a new Song, and so round again for ever. But these are things too sublime for our short reach and cognisance, only at present let us but consult the Experience of devout and grateful Souls about them, and this will assure us, that there is nothing under Heaven so pleasant and delightful as from a warm and vigorous sense of the Love of God, to breath up our Souls to him in Praise and Thanksgiving; that this gives such a Jubilee to the Mind, such a sprightful Recreation to the Heart, as far exceeds the most studied and artificial Pleasures of Epicurism. But for satisfaction in this point, we need go no further than to our praiseful Psalmist, who tho he were a King, and had all the Pleasures of a fruitful Kingdom at his beck and command, yet doth upon his own Experience advise, *Praise the Lord, for the Lord is Good; sing praises to his name, for*



it is pleasant: And elsewhere, *Praise the Lord, for it is good; to sing Praises to our God it is pleasant, and praise is comely.* Seeing therefore that Gratitude to God is so high a Pleasure, and such a grateful Entertainment to the rational Soul, when it is duly disposed; this is such a Motive to the Practice of it, as carries with it an eternal Force and Obligation.

III. Gratitude to God mightily obliges him to continue and repeat his Favors to us. For though God doth not covet our Thanksgivings for himself, or out of any prospect of Advantage they can bring him, he being so intirely happy in his own Perfections, that neither the Praises of Angels can add any thing to him, nor the Blasphemies of Devils subtract any thing from him; yet when he so freely bestows his Benefits upon us, he expects the return of our Gratitude, both as it is highly just and reasonable in itself, and vastly beneficial and advantageous to us. For he being infinitely reasonable himself, and loving himself infinitely for being so, he cannot for his own sake but love what is fit and reasonable in others; and what he so justly loves in us, he justly expects of us. It is highly displeasing to him to see us ungrateful to others, as well as to himself; not that he sustains any Damage thereby; for how can he be the worse for our Ingratitude to others? But the Ground of his Displeasure is, to see reasonable Beings so grossly swerve from the Canon of right Reason and Justice, and act so contrarily to the Laws of his Nature and their own. So again



he is as well pleased and delighted when he finds us thankful to our other Benefactors, as when we are so to him; not that he can reap the least Benefit or Advantage from the Thanks which we render to others; for how can he be the better for that which he doth not receive? But because the thing is just and reasonable in itself, and because whatsoever is so is amiable and delightfom in his Eyes: And as God expects our Gratitude for its own sake, as it is in itself a most just, and comely, and reasonable thing; so doth he also expect it for our sake, as it is one of the most advantageous things we can do for our selves. For by accustoming our selves to frequent Returns of Thanksgiving to God, we shall by degrees a thankful Frame and Disposition of Soul which (as I shall shew by and by) will both influence us in all other parts of our Duty with a mighty Chearfulness and Alacrity of Spirit, and carry us on through the most wearisom Stages of it with an indefatigable Vigour, and also inhanse the value of the Divine Benefits, and render them more precious in our esteem, and consequently more comfortable in our Enjoyment. When therefore we receive the Benefits of God with a thankful Heart, he obtains both these Ends upon us; which must needs lay a strong Obligation upon him to continue and multiply them to us: When he shall see that his Favors are not sown upon a barren Soil, but that they spring up in such Fruits as are most delightful to himself and most beneficial to us, what a powerful

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Motive must this be to ingage him to sow them more abundantly? There is nothing doth more oblige a generous Benefactor than to see a good Use made of his Benefits; and the best Use we can make of them, is to gratifie him with them in such things as he most delights in, and to improve to our utmost Advantage; which will render him so far from repenting of his Favors, and resolving to withhold them for the future, that it will be a mighty Gratification to himself to repeat and increase them when ever any just Occasion requires it. And therefore seeing God is the freest and most generous Benefactor in the World, we may depend upon it, that if we make that good Use of his Benefits for which he designed them; if we render him such grateful Returns for them as are truly delightful to him and advantageous to our selves, he will be so far from stinting his hand to us for the future, that he will *rejoyce over us to do us good*; and be as highly pleased to multiply his Benefits upon us, as we can be to receive them; in short the greatest Obligation that can be laid upon a generous Goodness, such as God's is, is to do good with his Benefits, and to fare well upon them, both which a thankful Mind doth to the highest Degree; and therefore such, and such only, are the proper Soil for God to sow his Benefits in. Here they will grow with vast Increase and Improvement, whereas in ungrateful Minds, they will either be soon washed away in a stupid Oblivion of them, or soon wither away in a sordid Neglect of them;



or else spring up only into Weeds and Tares, into Pride or Luxury, or vanity and vexation of Spirit. This therefore is an eternal Reason why we should offer up our Thanksgiving to God, because hereby we answer the great Ends for which he showers his Benefits on us, and thereby lay a powerful Obligation upon him to continue and increase 'em.

IV. Thankfulness to God doth very much promote and facilitate the Practice of Religion: For, as was shewn before, all hearty Thanksgiving springs out of a warm and vigorous Sense of Gods Goodness towards us, and as that naturally flows into Praise and Thanksgiving, so this flows as naturally into a free and chearful Obedience. The more thankful we are for the Benefits of God, the more sensible we shall still be of our Obligations to him; and the more sensible we are of these, the more disposed we shall be to gratifie him by our ready Obedience to him. These things follow as naturally one another, as Heat follows Fire, and as Burning follows Heat. He therefore who by frequent Acts of Praise hath acquired a thankful frame and disposition of Soul, hath surmounted three parts in four of all the Fatigue of Religion: For what can be too hard for a Soul, that is inspired with an active Sense of the Divine Goodness? This will convert the most painful Duties into the most delightful Recreations, and prove such an ever-flowing Fountain of Divine Rhetorick within us as will supersede the necessity of any other Motives and Arguments. How can I do



too much, cries the grateful Soul, for so kind a God and so liberal a Benefactor? To his boundless Goodness I owe all that I am, all that I have, and all that I hope for; to him I am indebted for such stupendious Favours, as considering my unworthiness of 'em, doth not only puzzle my Conceit, but out-reach my Wonder and Admiration. And can I be so base as to reckon any thing too much in return for such astonishing Kindnesses? I can give him back nothing but what I have received of him; and if I should give him back my Life or the dearest Enjoyment I have in the World, I should not give him the thousandth Part of what I have received. What then shall I render unto the Lord for all his Benefits? Shall I not chearfully render him whatever he asks, tho it were greatly to my damage; tho it were to strip my self of all the Comforts of my Life; to sacrifice my *Isaac* to him; yea, my own Life and Being? And much more when he asks nothing of me but what is fit and reasonable; nothing but what is profective of my Nature, and conducive to my eternal Happiness: When he only requires me to sacrifice my Lusts unto him; which are the shame and scandal of my Nature; to wash and be clean; to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts; and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World. O far be it from me to deny such a bountiful Friend, such just and reasonable Demands. This is the constant Sense of a truly grateful Soul. And being under the Influence of such moving Oratory and Persuasion, with what



Chearfulness and Alacrity must she run the ways of God's Commandments? How greedily must she catch at all Opportunities of serving him? And how readily close with every Intimation of his Will, how contrary soever to the Inclinations of Flesh and Blood? And instead of bogling at the difficulties of Religion, O, how will such a Soul rejoyce that she hath an opportunity in her Hands to express, by the readiness of her Obedience, the grateful Sense she hath of that Goodness to which she is so infinitely obliged? Doubtless were our Hearts but touch'd with a quick Sense of the Goodness of God, this would carry us triumphantly thorough all the Difficulties of our Duty; and we should be so far for the future from complaining of the uneasiness of our Yoke, that we should be ready to thank God upon our Knees, for putting such a **Test of Duty** on us whereby we might have an opportunity to express our Gratitude to him by the readiness of our Obedience. Seeing therefore that **Thanksgiving** is so great a furtherance to us in the course of our Duty, to be sure if we owe any thing to God, we must owe this to him by an eternal Obligation.

V. **Thanksgiving** to God will render all his Favors to us more grateful and acceptable to our selves. All Benefits are greater or lesser to us as they stand higher or lower in our esteem and valuation. To enjoy the light of the Sun is doubtless in itself a very great Benefit, but the commonness of it takes off our heedless Minds from attending to it, and weigh-



weighing it in the Balance of a just Valuation, by reason of which it grows Cheap in our esteem, and we have no tast or relish of the Pleasure and Comfort of it, but enjoy it year after year with a perfect Unconcern and Indifferency. But if after a long Blindness our Sight should be instantly restored to us, or we should of a sudden be snatcht up into the Light after a tedious Confinement to some dismal Dungeon, O with what Rapture should we salute the Day, what Hymns should we sing to the joyful Light? with what chearful Thoughts would it inspire our Breasts, and with what unspeakable Joy should we survey that glorious Scene of things which it opens and discloses? and yet the benefit of Light is the same to all that enjoy it; and if those who continually enjoy it, had maintained in their Minds the same just esteem of it, as they have who are newly restored to it, they would always enjoy it with the same Satisfaction: And the case is the same as to all the other Benefits of God, of a great part of the Comfort whereof we spoil and deprive our selves; for want of that grateful Sense and just Esteem of them, which they merit and deserve; for a thankful Mind will make the utmost of the Benefits it receives, and weigh them nicely by Grains and Scruples, and consider them in all their endearing Circumstances, and take into its account their most minute Appendages, to inhance its own value and esteem of them. And seeing it is our esteem of Benefits that raises or sinks our Enjoyment of

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them, to be sure the higher we esteem the Benefits of God, the more we must enjoy them. So that while unthankful Souls for want of a just estimate of the Favors of God, do scarce enjoy the Tith of them, but whilst they feed on them are dissatisfied with them, and like the most currish Animals, while they are gnawing on their Prey, do grumble over it; those who are truly thankful feed upon every Blessing with Joy and Content, and like the industrious Bees, having sucked out all the Sweetness of the Flowers they live upon, go singing home with it to their Hives. And I make no doubt but he who hath a grateful Sense and a just Esteem of the Goodness of God to him, enjoys with far more Comfort even a Cup of fair Water and a Brown Morsel, than the fat ungrateful Glutton doth his studied and artificial Luxuries. Seeing therefore our Thankfulness to God for his Benefits doth so much heighten and improve our Enjoyment of them, if it be eternally Reasonable that we should make the best of his Benefits, this lays an eternal Obligation on us to be grateful to him.

VI. And lastly, Thankfulness to God gives a great support to our Hope and Dependence on him for the future; for besides that, the very Sense and Consciousness of the thankful Returns we have made him will encourage us to hope, that that God who hath found us grateful for what we have received, will account himself obliged in Generosity, though not in Justice, to heap his Favors on us more abundantly; the



the thankful Reception of past Favors being the greatest Inducement to generous Benefactors, to bestow more and greater for the future: besides this I say the very Recollection and Remembrance of the manifold Favors of God which we have already received, and which our own grateful Sense of them, will be sure to ingrave upon our Minds in the most durable Characters, will prove a constant fund of happy Experience for our Hope to live upon for the future; so that when ever we are reduced to strait and low Circumstances, and are either pinched with the want of any necessary Good, or are ready to despond of deliverance from any imminent Evil, the grateful Remembrance we retain of past Instances of Gods Kindness to us, will be a mighty Incouragement to our Faith and Hope securely to depend upon him for the future. *The Lord that delivered me, saith David, out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistian.* Where you see he grounds his Dependence for one Deliverance, upon his grateful Remembrance of another; and indeed there is no man in the World can have that ample Experience of the Goodness of God, as he who makes constant returns of Praise and Thanksgiving for it; such a Man, merely to improve his Gratitude, will make it his Business curiously to animadvert upon every Instance of the Divine Goodness, and to descant upon every Hint, Intimation, and Circumstance of it, and treasure up every passage in everlasting Remembrance. And seeing Experience



is nothing but the Observation of things treasured up in the Memory, he who best remembers the manifold Expressions of Gods Goodness to him, and makes the strictest Observations upon them, must have attained to the fullest and most intimate Experience of it; and when all is done, there is nothing will create in us that sure Confidence in God and firm Dependence upon him, as our own Experience of his Faithfulness and Goodness. If I have a Friend whom in numerous Instances I have always found faithful, and constant, and kind, I reckon I may rely upon him with almost the same Security as I can rely upon my self and when in innumerable Instances I have always found God my Friend, my generous, kind and faithful Friend, and I have all these Instances of it fresh in my Memory, and under my Observation, this must needs create in me a very secure Affiance in him, and carry up my Faith and Hope into an high Plerophory Thus Gratitude to God begets in us an ample Experience of his Goodness, and that Experience begets in us a firm Dependence upon him; so that if it be eternally reasonable that we should securely rely upon God, by whose Power and Goodness we are supported in Being every moment of our Existence; it is upon this account also eternally reasonable that we should offer up our Thanksgivings to him.

To conclude all therefore, seeing our Obligations to this Duty are so great and many, let us be persuaded to comply with them in our Practice. Certainly



tainly never were any People more importunately invited hereunto than we are at this time. It is not long since we were threatned with a Forein Invasion, and had too much cause to apprehend the Landing of a formidable Enemy on our Shoars; an Enemy that by a thousand Barbarities, hath proclaimed himself an implacable Prosecutor of our Religion, and that wheresoever he goes carries Ruin and Destruction along with him. But behold all of a sudden the melancholly Scene is changed, and our dark Prospect is cleared up into a glorious Vision; for by a wonderful Interposure of the Divine Providence, we are not only delivered from the hands of our Enemies, but our Enemies are delivered into ours; their Naval Force in which they so much gloried, and upon which their whole Success depended, being, by the miraculous Blessing of God upon the good Conduct and Bravery of ours, scattered and broken in a few Hours, and we not only preserved, but crowned with one of the most glorious and signal Victories that ever the Sea beheld; which considering our Circumstances, who have no other Trench but the Ocean, no other Wall but our Navy round about us, is certainly one of the most remarkable Instances of God's watchful Providence over us for good, that even our own Hearts could have wished for: for how much the good Providence of God hath concerned it self in this whole Affair, is so remarkably evident, that we cannot but discern it unless we wilfully shut our own Eyes. For what a strange Concurrence was there



there of Events that are only in the Disposal of God, *the Stars in their Courses fought against Cicera*; the Winds and Storms for several Weeks were armed against one part of their Navy, by which some were lost, others disabled, and all detained from joyning with the other part of it, which by contrary Winds was also detained from Ingaging us, till such time as our whole Force was united, and then God gave a Gale that blew them on to their own Destruction. To all which is to be added, another most considerable Instances of Gods good Providence towards us, *viz.* that a wary Enemy, who always acts with the greatest Caution and most sagacious Foresight, and who never yet fought without some considerable Advantage, should be so stupendiously infatuated as to give us close Battle with a Strength so much inferiour to ours. These are all *the Lords doings*, and they ought *to be marvellous in our Eyes*; to excite our Gratitude and unite our Hearts and Lips in Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving to him, that hereby we may ingage our Merciful God still to *rejoice over us to do us good*, and continue to bless their Majesties Arms with Glory and Success.

And in pursuance of this excellent Duty, let us all be perswaded frequently to retire from our worldly Occasions into our own Thoughts, and there to recollect the manifold Favors of God to us, to spread them before our Eyes in their full breadth, and length, and depth, to turn them up and down upon our Thoughts and survey them in all their Parts and



Proportions, till by a thorough view and consideration of their indearing Features and Lineaments our Hearts grow warm with a grateful Sense of 'em, and then to pour out our Souls to God in Praises and Thanksgivings; by the constant Practice of which we shall by degrees acquire a thankful frame and disposition of Soul. And as we grow on and improve in this heavenly Virtue, we shall feel so much Life and Spirit and Sweetness in it, that we shall need no other Motive than that to oblige us to the Practice of it, and our own Experience will convince us of a Truth; which now perhaps seems a wild Paradox to us, *viz.* That to be sensible of Gods Benefits, and to Meditate on his Goodness, to admire his Excellencies, and to celebrate his Praises, is Heaven itself, the Life of Angels, the Quintessence of all Joy, and in a word, the supreme Felicity of reasonable Beings. Wherefore to assist your Endeavours, and carry on your Minds to this great and blessed Work, I shall briefly propose to your Meditations a few grateful Considerations concerning the Divine Benefits, and so conclude.

First, Consider the vast extent of God's Benefits, as to the Number of 'em.

Secondly, Their stupendious Greatness as, to the Degree and Value of 'em.

Thirdly, The generous Freeness of 'em on God's Part.

Fourthly, The great Immerit and Undeservedness of 'em on ours.

Fifthly, The condescending Manner of his bestowing 'em upon us.



*First*, Consider the vast extent of God's Benefits towards us, as to the Number of 'em, which is so vastly great that we can no more count 'em than we can the Motes in the Air or the Sands on the Sea-shoar: all that we can do is to reduce 'em under such Kinds and Orders as the Astronomers do the Stars under such Constellations; but to count 'em singly one by one is a Task exceeds all Arithmetick. In general, for every thing we are, for every thing we have or ever have had or shall have, we are indebted to his Bounty. That we are Men and not Worms, that we are not Stones or clods of Earth, utterly insensible of all Good, and incapable of all Felicity; that we are inspired with immortal Minds endowed with vast capacities of Happiness; that we have so many sensible Organs capable of relishing such a vast variety of Pleasures; and that we have so many suitable Pleasures round about us to treat and entertain 'em; that we have Life and Motion, Health and Vigour, Sense and Perception, Reason and Understanding to guide and govern 'em, is wholly to be ascribed to his Goodness, which penetrates to the very Root and Center of our Beings. We move upon his Earth, and do breath upon his Air; we drink of his Springs, and are fed from his Granaries, and clothed from his Wardrobe; and in a word, every good Thing we possess that is either necessary for our Subsistence, or convenient for our Use, or pleasant for our Enjoyment, we derive from his inexhaustible Bounty; which daily encompasses us round  
about



about like many Fortunate Islands with an Ocean of Blessings, the single drops whereof (tho we are every moment of our Lives sensibly refreshed with one or other of 'em) we can no more recount than the endless Moments of Eternity. But if to these numberless Benefits of God which we every day taste, and do sensibly relish and enjoy, we add that numberless more of which we are not sensible, because they run under Ground in invisible Channels; so that we neither see nor taste 'em, tho they do us a world of good we know not how, and insensibly preserve us from a world of Evils: We may well cry out with the Prophet David, Psalm 139. 17, 18. *How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! i. e. thy kind and merciful Thoughts. How great is the sum of 'em! If I should count 'em they are more in number than the sand. Tho when I awake I am still with thee, i. e. recounting thy Favour from Morning to Night, but after all can see no end of 'em.*

*Secondly,* Consider the stupendious Greatness of the Benefits of God, as to the Degree and Value of 'em. There are indeed various Degrees of Worth in the Benefits of God, but the cheapest of 'em are those which the Divine Goodness hath prepared to serve our present Necessities, Conveniencies, and Pleasures; and yet a great part of these are of such an intrinsic Worth, that if the plenty and commonness of 'em did not depress their value, we should esteem em inestimable Treasures. How comfortable is the appearance of Day after the long Nights under the Nor-



thern Pole? What precious Things are a Cup of fair Water or a Morsel of brown Bread to such as are pinched with Hunger or parched with Drought? And did we but value the smallest Benefits of God, while we enjoy 'em, but according to the prices we our selves set upon 'em when we want 'em, it is to be fear'd we should esteem 'em higher than we do now the greatest. But as for those Benefits of God which concern our better Part and eternal Interest, they are such as only an infinite Goodness can bestow; for what Goodness less than Infinite could have prepared for us a Heaven of immortal Joys; Joys which the holy Angels, yea, which God him self lives upon? What lesser Goodness could send down the Son of God to us from the Bosom of his Father to assume our Nature, and therein to make Expiation for our Sins; to Consecrate for us a new and living Way through the Veil of his own Flesh into the heavenly Sanctuary, and by the Light of his Doctrine and the Footsteps of his Example, to guide and direct us thither? What less than the same Goodness could send down the Holy Spirit to us to instruct and teach us, to perswade and admonish us, and thereby to cultivate our rank and degenerate Natures, in which there is such strong aversions to all the heavenly Enjoyments; and to render us fit for the glorious Inheritance of the Saints in Light? In a word, what less than an infinite Goodness could thus industriously employ the whole Sacred Trinity in contriving, preparing, and accomplishing our everlasting Happiness,

by



by such amazing, such refined and expressive Methods of Mercy? For verily when I set my self to consider the mighty Things which God hath done to make us happy, I seem to be looking down from some stupendous Precipice, whose height fills me with a sacred horror, that turns my Head, confounds my Understanding; and almost oversets my Reason, so that I am forc'd to cry out sometimes with the Psalmist, *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him; or the Son of man that thou visitest him with such astonishing favour?* And sometimes with S. Paul with a little more variation, *O the depth of the riches, of the goodness and bounty of God! how unsearchable are his designs of mercy, and his ways of beneficence past finding out!*

*Thirdly*, Consider the generous Freedom of the Divine Benefits on God's part. Even the noblest Benefactors among Men have great intermixtures of selfishness with their Beneficence; for either they gratifie their own Vanity with it, and affectation of popular Applause, or they rid themselves of a troublesome Importunity; or ease the yearning Bowels of their own Compassion; or hope to secure themselves a firm and lasting Interest in those they do good to: and even those who act from the nobler Principles of Religion, and do good in submission to God, and in conformity to his Nature, are not so utterly divested of these selfish Regards, but that they many times intermingle 'em even with their purest Intentions, and even whilst they act upon those Religious Principles, it is all along in prospect of their own everlasting Happiness. Thus we poor Creatures even in our most pious and gene-



rous Beneficences are by the sense of our own Want and Indigency continually biassed towards our own Interest either temporal or eternal or both. But in God who wants nothing, but is Self-sufficient and infinitely happy in his own infinite Perfections, Matters are far otherwise; he seeks nothing without himself, because he wants nothing, and so can have no Self-End in any Action *ad extra*; from all the Benefits that he heaps upon us he can reap no other advantage but only the satisfaction of doing Good, and the Gratification of the infinite Generosity of his Nature. So that his own Action is his End, and he doth good meerly for doing goods Sake. He is neither compell'd to it by Necessity, nor oblig'd to it by any other Law but that of his own Nature. He is neither wearied nor worried into it either by our Importunity, or by any painful Sense he hath of our Misery. He is neither flattered by our Promises nor endeared by our Deserts, nor bribed by any Prospect he hath of future Advantage to himself, but being absolute Master of his own Actions, and sole Counsellour and Lawgiver to himself; being the most perfectly independent and allsufficient Source of his own Happiness; beyond which he cannot so much as desire, or expect, or hope, being infallibly secure, that nothing which either we or any other Creature can do either for or against him can either add to or subtract from his essential Glory and Beatitude; being, all this I say, and a thousand Times more than all this, from a most uninterested Bounty and  
pure



pure good Will and generosity of Nature; he delights to do us Good, heaps Benefit after Benefit upon us, for no other end but to benefit us, and in plentiful Showers is continually pouring down his Graces and Favors upon us, purely that he may profit and please us, and if possible content and satisfy us, and render us happy both here and hereafter. This is all the return he expects for his Benefits, and if he can but do us good by them he hath his end, and is gratified to the utmost of his Expectations. O the boundless Freedom of the Goodness of God towards us, that without any other aim but to do us good, lets forth itself in such plentiful Effusions. How excellent is thy loving Kindness, O Lord, how indearing are thy Favors! who can rehearse thy noble Acts! who can shew forth all thy Praise! who with such an unparallell'd frankness and generosity of Soul art continually multiplying thy Benefits upon us.

*Fourthly,* Consider the great Immerit and Undeservedness of Gods Benefits on our parts, considering the number and greatness of Gods Mercies and Favors to us. A Stranger to Mankind would be prone to imagine, that by our extraordinary Services, we had laid some vast Obligation upon God, for which he esteemed himself so deeply indebted to us, that nothing within the compass of an infinite Goodness, could be too great a repayment; but God knows, the Case is far otherwise, for instead of obliging him to be kind to us, we have so ungratefully requited his Kindness, and our Carriage towards him hath been so froward

and



and perverse under the most endearing expressions of his Goodness, that were he not as infinite in Patience as he is in Justice and Power, we had long since provoked him to extirpate the whole Race of us from the Face of the Earth, and to consign us our Portion with our fellow-Rebels, the Devils, in everlasting Horror and Despair: for instead of acknowledging his manifold Favors by our dutiful Behaviour, which is the most acceptable return we can make of them, as if it had been as much our care to affront and provoke him, as it is his to oblige us by perpetual Beneficence. We treat our own base Lusts, which are the only things he hateth, with his Mercies and Favors; we give his Bread to our Gluttony, his Drink to our Intemperance, his Cloths to our Pride and Vanity; he lends us Breath and we blaspheme him with it, he inspires us with Wit and Understanding, and we expose and ridicule him with it; he gives us Health and Strength and we employ it against him in Wantonness and Luxury. And thus we basely sacrifice his Favors to the Devil; and tho we do not all of us thus openly outrage him with his own Benefits, yet how few are there that employ 'em to those good Ends and Purposes for which he designs and bestows 'em? How little good do we with 'em to others, And how little the better are we for 'em our selves? How cold and indifferent are we upon the Receipt of 'em? How slothful in the Improvement of 'em? How selfish in the Use and Enjoyment of 'em? And what lame and wretched returns do we commonly  
make



make of 'em? And yet for all this, O wonder of Goodness! God is not at all a weary of doing good to us; but doth not only still continue to us his common and standing Benefits, such as the Light and Heat of the Sun, the Fruits of the Earth, and the Comforts of the Elements; together with a strong, and healthful, and vigorous Capacity of Enjoying 'em, but also those peculiar Favours which respect our everlasting well-Being, *viz.* The Instructions of his Word, and the Refreshments of his Sacraments, and the Assistances of his Spirit; which by a Thousand invisible Arts and Methods of Kindness which we take no notice of, but rather resist and oppose, doth still drive on the great Design of making us everlastingly Happy; the consideration whereof, if we have any Spark of Ingenuity in us, cannot but inflame our Souls with Gratitude and Praise.

*Fifthly*, and Lastly, Consider the condescending Manner of God's bestowing his Benefits upon us: For tho' it be infinite Condescension in him to think of us, who are placed so far beneath his Thoughts, who are but Worms crawling under his Feet, and whom he can crush into nothing at his Pleasure; tho' he Dwells on high, as the Psalmist Truly and Emphatically expresses it, Infinitely Blessed in his own native Glories and Perfections, and is an Allsufficient Prospect and Entertainment to himself; yet he not only *humbles himself to behold the things that are done in Heaven and earth*, but also humbles himself to behold even us, to provide for us, and to take as much



care of us, as if our Concerns were his own; nay he humbles himself so far as to treat as our Friend, as if we stood upon the same level with him; and espouses our Interest as if it were his own, and as if he could not be Happy without our being so; yea farther yet, he treats us as if we were his Superiours; places us upon the Throne, as it were, and himself at the Footstool, and intreats and supplicates to admit of his Love and accept of his Favours; he sends Embassadours of Peace to us, to sue for our Amity, and to *beseech us to be reconciled to him.* O blessed God, what injury didst thou ever do us that thou shouldst address to us for Reconciliation! that we should sue to thee indeed, who have injured and affronted thee beyond the Patience of any but a God to endure, is doubtless the most just, and reasonable Thing in the World: But that thou shouldest sue to us who never didst any thing but Goodness to us, who hast obliged us beyond all our Capacities of repaying thee, who hast been kind to us even to Wonder and Astonishment: and this not only without our desert, but after our highest Affronts, and notwithstanding our most disingenuous Provocations to the contrary. O blessed God, what amazing Condescensions are these! For when after all his kind Attempts to prevail upon our Obstinacy, gratefully to accept his Favours, and by so doing to improve 'em to our own everlasting Advantage; he finds we are incurably determined to the contrary; with what passionate Regrets, and Yernings, and turning of Bowels, doth he discharge us  
from



from his paternal Care, and abandon us to the dire Effects of our own Folly? Such wondrous Stoops of the divine Majesty would tempt one to think, *and did* we not demonstrably know the contrary, that God hath as much need of us as we have of his Favours, *did ar* that it is as much for his good that we should thankfully receive 'em, as it is for ours that he should generously bestow 'em. But after all this, we do most certainly know, if we know any thing of the Nature of God, that it can be nothing but pure Goodness and Generosity of Nature that obliges and determines him to these amazing Condescensions. Which if we weigh in the balance of a just Consideration, together with the foregoing Motives, cannot fail, if we have any spark either of Modesty, Ingenuity, or even Humanity remaining in us, to determine us to follow the excellent Advice of the Psalmist in the Text, *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high.* Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Majesty and Dominion, from this time forth and for evermore. *Amen.*

## F I N I S.

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### ADVERTISEMENT.

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